

While Republicans are putting their fingers in their ears and pretending that our country isn't in the grips of a gun violence epidemic, innocent people continue to die. What makes this inaction even harder to accept is the fact that, for over 3½ years, I have had bipartisan, pro-Second Amendment legislation that would help make these tragedies less common.

My bill would close a dangerous loophole in our background check system that allows criminals, domestic abusers, and the dangerously mentally ill to bypass a background check in 34 States when purchasing guns online, at a gun show, or through classified ads.

Background checks are our first line of defense when it comes to making sure that dangerous people don't purchase guns. We know that, when used, they work. Every day, background checks stop more than 170 felons, some 50 domestic abusers, and nearly 20 fugitives from buying a gun. But, sadly, this gaping hole allows those same felons, domestic abusers, and fugitives to easily bypass a background check when buying firearms.

H.R. 1217 has 187 bipartisan coauthors and 90 percent of the American people support strengthening and expanding our background check system.

Mr. Speaker, let us have a vote on this bill. Gun violence shouldn't be a partisan issue. When deranged gunmen open fire in a nightclub, movie theater, or school, they don't care if you are a Democrat or Republican. Together, we can build a country in which all Americans feel safe being who they are, having fun in a nightclub, going to school, seeing a movie, going to Bible study, an office party, or simply walking down the streets of their own neighborhood.

Mr. Speaker, let us do the work the American people sent us here to do. Let us vote on the legislation they want to see enacted. Let us vote to keep our fellow Americans safe.

Each day the Republican majority drags its feet and refuses to give us a vote on bipartisan, pro-Second Amendment bills to help keep guns out of dangerous hands, more innocent lives are lost.

Give us a vote. And give us a vote now, before you recess for another break.

CONSTITUTION WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. JENKINS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, September 17–23 is Constitution Week, where we celebrate the document and principles that are the foundation of this great Nation. Constitution Day on the 17th marks the ratification of this great document.

The Constitution is the basis of our Nation. It is the reason we are here today. It lays out the fundamental principles and structures of our Nation

and our government. And the Bill of Rights makes clear the rights we enjoy as Americans and the fact that the Federal Government cannot infringe on these rights. Every decision I make as a Member of Congress is informed by the words written in the pages of this Constitution.

All over the world, our Constitution stands as a pillar of justice, freedom, and good governance. Other countries look to our Constitution for guidance as they write their own constitutions and establish their own democracies.

As we celebrate Constitution Week, I also want to recognize the great work of the Daughters of the American Revolution, including the chapters in my district, for their efforts to educate America about this document and its history.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our Founding Fathers in crafting this great document, a Constitution that has stood the test of time.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, during two townhall meetings recently, I had the opportunity to hear from our veterans about the care they are receiving from VA hospitals. They want, they need—no, they deserve—a VA healthcare system that works for them, one that gives them timely care, one that treats our veterans with respect and one that holds VA bureaucrats accountable.

I am proud to support H.R. 5620, a necessary step to getting the VA working again for our veterans. I will not stand for a system that rewards Washington bureaucrats for failing to do their job. There are a lot of good, caring people at the VA and their employees at our hospitals, and we need to make sure they have an environment and system where they can serve our veterans.

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I stand with our veterans, and for the commonsense reforms to the problems that they are facing. I will continue to work to make sure the VA is held accountable; that veterans receive the best health care in the country—no, in the world—and that a broken system is fixed. Our veterans have sacrificed so much for us, and we must keep the promises we have made to them.

SILENCE EQUALS DEATH IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Ms. CLARK) for 5 minutes.

Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to demand a vote on commonsense gun safety legislation. It has been 26 years since our country has passed any meaningful gun safety legislation.

I have only been in the House for a little over 2½ years, and we have had 10 moments of silence to recognize victims of mass shootings during that time.

After Fort Hood in April of 2014, when 19 people were shot in a deadly rampage, Republican leaders brought us together for a moment of silence, but there was no discussion about honoring those lives with our action.

In May of 2014, the country came together after a massacre in Santa Barbara, and families looked to our Nation's leaders to see what they could do. What did they hear? More silence.

In June of 2015, nine parishioners were murdered by a hate-filled radical—who was able to get his gun because of a loophole—while they were at a Bible study at the Emanuel Church in South Carolina. While those lost inspired our country, the Members of Congress bowed their heads in silence and did nothing else.

Then there was Chattanooga, Roseburg, Colorado Springs, and San Bernardino. Dozens were murdered in senseless killing sprees. And while the country demanded a vote to finally do something about gun violence, this Congress responded with silence.

Three months ago, after the worst gun massacre in modern history took place at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, some of us had finally had enough. If our friends in the LGBT community have taught us anything, it is that silence equals death. And this is no time to be silent.

Our frustration, and the frustration of the American people, resulted in a sit-in that gave voice to the American families who are fed up with a Congress that is cowed into silence by the rich and powerful gun lobby.

Here we are, 3 months later, and House Republicans have spent more time thinking about how they can punish us for that sit-in than doing anything to address the gun violence devastating Americans.

In July, rather than allow debates and votes on keeping American children and families safe, Republican leaders adjourned this House. Since then, an additional 2,015 Americans were killed by guns. In Chicago alone, 3,000 people have been killed or injured by guns just this year.

This is a public health crisis, and this Republican Congress has returned to its routine silence instead of working to keep Americans safe. I am here to tell you, the American people will not forget and will not continue to stand for this silence and inaction.

Every single day, victims and survivors of gun violence come and tell their heart-wrenching stories to Members of Congress.

I have stood with Felicia Sanders as she gathered the courage to stand in front of our Nation's Capitol and tell the story that no mother should have to tell. At Emanuel Church in North Carolina, Felicia's son, Tywanza, ran toward the gunman while trying to shield others in his Bible study group. Tywanza was only 26 when Felicia said her final goodbye.

I have had the honor of thanking Catherine Bodine for coming and telling her story to the American people.

Her abuser, who had prior felony convictions, found a loophole, purchased a gun online with no background check, no waiting period, nothing. Catherine was shot three times trying to protect her 10-year-old daughter. Her daughter, Sami, the girl she called her best friend and her inspiration, died in her arms.

These mothers, and thousands more like them, get up every single morning and summon the bravery to be beacons for change this country is asking for. Although their lives are forever changed by violence, they take it upon themselves to fight for their communities, tell their stories, and make sure that no other family has to experience this horror.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is this: If everyday people, moms like Felicia and Catherine, can find the courage to fight for change, why is their courage met with the cowardice of silence?

Let's have a vote, have the debate to honor the lives that they have lost and that we have lost as a country, and let's end this stony, callous silence.

NATIONAL MANUFACTURING DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. REED) for 5 minutes.

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize October 7 as National Manufacturing Day here in America. As the bipartisan co-chair of the House Manufacturing Caucus, with my good friend from Ohio, TIM RYAN, I think it is only right that we stand to recognize the efforts of U.S. manufacturing across our great country.

We care about U.S. manufacturing because it brings family-sustaining, good quality jobs to the 12.33 million workers that are employed in the United States in the manufacturing industry. That is 9 percent of our workforce, Mr. Speaker, and it contributes \$2.17 trillion to the U.S. economy on an annual basis.

In my district alone, in western New York, the 23rd Congressional District, Mr. Speaker, there are over 404 manufacturers who employ approximately 44,000 people. That is food on the table, Mr. Speaker. That is roofs over the heads of those workers and their families, and it provides an opportunity for those families and the generation that follows with an opportunity to succeed and advance in their life.

It is only right, Mr. Speaker, that we join together, on a bipartisan basis, to support U.S. manufacturing in America. That is why I partnered with my good friend on the other side, JOE KENNEDY, to author and finally get passed into law the Revitalize American Manufacturing and Innovation Act that is the source of innovation in advanced manufacturing going forward.

That is also why I support an all-of-the-above energy plan. That is why we have also put forth a plan in writing to advance the energy effort here in America.

Also, on the Ways and Means Committee on which I serve, I am fully

committed to a better way when it comes to revising and reforming the American Tax Code. It is time for us to have a fair, simple, and competitive Tax Code for all Americans.

On the trade front, Mr. Speaker, I stand in unison with my colleagues on the other side who want to make sure that we have fair trade; that we have enforceable agreements where unfair practices by countries that violate the spirit, the rules, and the law of trade are held accountable. That is why we need to make sure that when we engage in these trade negotiations going forward that we have trade agreements that not only open our market but also, most importantly, open the market of the 95 percent of the world's consumers that live outside of America's borders.

We need to stand with U.S. manufacturers in those negotiations. We need to make sure that U.S. manufacturing interests are put at the foremost priority of the negotiation points.

There is a firm philosophy that I adhere to in our office when it comes to U.S. manufacturing. We have one of the greatest, if not the greatest—no, strike that, Mr. Speaker. We have the greatest workforce in the world. We have the brightest minds in the world in America, and we have the ability to make it here and sell it there.

So I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing October 7 as U.S. Manufacturing Day. And if you are so inclined, join us in the U.S. Manufacturing Caucus, so you can be an active member participating in the debate to advance U.S. manufacturing interests so that we do, again, make it here to sell it across the world, and we put America's manufacturing interests first in all conversations that we have.

GUN VIOLENCE IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) for 5 minutes.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, there is a public health emergency in our country. Are you thinking of Zika? Are you thinking of opioids? Yes, they are public health emergencies, but there is another ongoing, long-term public health emergency, and that is gun violence.

I thank the chair of our task force, Mr. THOMPSON; Mr. LARSON for organizing it; the great icon, JOHN LEWIS, for galvanizing all of the concern in the Congress around this issue; DAVID CICILLINE and, of course, our distinguished Member we just heard from, Congresswoman CLARK from Massachusetts, for their leadership.

ROBIN KELLY of Illinois has been a champion, and so has JUDY CHU. So many Members have taken the lead on this issue, as ELIZABETH ESTY did before she was even sworn in in Congress, addressing the concerns at Newtown.

Ninety-one people lose their life to gun violence every day. That is not a statistic, that is an outrage. It is a

challenge to the conscience of our Nation to end Congress' appalling inaction on gun violence prevention.

Across America, communities are standing up, speaking out, and lighting the way. A preventable public health crisis is taking the lives of our children, our neighbors, and our friends. You would think that when the lives of little children in school were taken that that would be the end of it, that would end the discussion, and that any common ground that we could find to expand the background checks, which is not a big thing really, in terms of just including Internet sales and gun shows—just expanding what we have, not a big legislative move but would make a tremendous difference in saving lives in our country.

This Congress must hear the voices of those calling for action to keep guns out of the wrong hands. And I want to just talk about some of the voices that I recently heard when I was in Florida a couple of weeks ago. I went to Orlando and visited Pulse, the nightclub where the gun violence there took place. It was gun violence, and it was a hate crime, which is a deadly combination.

When I met with the families and some of the survivors there to hear their concerns about hate crimes and gun violence, they said to me, really to a person, please do something to stop gun violence. As consumed as they were with the fact that this was a hate crime, the gun violence issue was what each one of them spoke about, that they had lost their loved ones.

These are young people out on a Saturday night. One mom who went there to take her son to see his friends and the rest and make sure he was safe, the mom died, and the son survived. Any mom would prefer that outcome, but why does that have to be the choice?

So here they are: if you are in kindergarten, if you are in the movie theater, or if you are in church praying, as was referenced by our colleagues about South Carolina—that was a hate crime, too. The awful statements made by the perpetrator of that crime where he exploited the hospitality that was extended to him to pray together, and then for him to make his hateful remarks, racist remarks, and then do violence on the people who had welcomed him to pray with them.

So where is it that people are safe? What can we do to make a difference?

Well, for one thing, if you are too dangerous to fly, you should be too dangerous to buy a gun. Eighty to 90 percent of the American people subscribe to that. That shouldn't be controversial in the Congress.

We are supposed to be Representatives representing the will of the people. And where there is consensus—we have enough disagreement, but where there is consensus, a public health emergency, and loss of life, even to little children, people in church, young people out on the town, people going to the movies, what is it that our colleagues don't understand?